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## THE PINE TREES.

In a lake that lies in the wilderness drear,  
 'Midst a maze of mountains rolling and green,  
 By whose wide-spread waters, deep and clear,  
 Never a dwelling of man was seen,—  
 There's an island of crags of granite stone,  
 Cushioned with moss and draped with ferns,  
 In whose crevices rooted, three pines have grown  
 Tall and mighty,—and each top turns  
 Eastward as if to catch the beams  
 Which the early sun o'er the forest throws.  
 Then the sad, dark green drinks the rosy gleams,  
 And warms to a sombre joy, or glows  
 With ruddier light, when the streaming clouds  
 Wake from their grey sleep and float in crowds—  
 Golden-fleeced flocks unfolded by Day,  
 Loosed o'er the heavenly fields to stray.

So, watching for ever this sunrise change,  
 These trees had grown old, and—was it strange?  
 Each time that the glad light left them, alone  
 To watch through the dreary night, and long,  
 For their sunrise blessing—their morning song,  
 Their green grew darker, more sombre in tone.

Some hundred years at least had shed  
 Their riches of sunshine and rain and snow  
 On the spreading arms and the towering head  
 Of each ever-green Titan: the trees below  
 Scarce raised their tops to the first green limbs,  
 Through which, at sunrise, the wind sang hymns  
 Solemn and sad, as befits the tree—  
 Strains of a mystic minstrelsy.

Rugged and brown, their roots twined round  
 The boulders of granite midst which they grew,  
 Hugging them closer till all was bound  
 Into one mighty mass,—and no wind that blew  
 Could loosen their clutch on that islet's heart,  
 Or tear one root from its hold apart.  
 The soft, dense mosses grew over the grey  
 And stern old granite, and lovingly veiled  
 Its jags and angles with undulant play  
 Of swelling green and softness piled.

Above, the trees were interlaced—  
 A vault of green, with blue stars graced,  
 Through which the golden sunshine played  
 Into the silence of the broad, deep shade.  
 Gently they stole,—those golden gleams—  
 The shaggy pine trunks caught the beams,  
 Which trickled and flowed in flickering streams,  
 Spangling the bark with their flecks of gold,—  
 Then down on the beech-boles and into the ferns—  
 Warming the dark, decaying mould,  
 With the fire that kindles but never burns.  
 And here the arbutus its network weaves  
 Amid the fallen and withered leaves—  
 And tiny traceries of vines  
 Oclimb up the stems of the massive pines.

Beneath the shade, one August day,  
 A wandering Artist dreaming lay,  
 Watching the sunshine round him fall—  
 Hearing the winds above him call  
 From the sad pine trees their weird strain,  
 One moment all music—then silent again.  
 To the forest depth he had wandered, alone  
 To rest from the clamor of life, and now, prone

On the moss-clad rocks beneath the trees,  
 Lay, thinking of Life and the dreams we see,—  
 Of Death and the things of Eternity.  
 Fitful as childhood the western breeze  
 Played in the pine tops and swung them, until,  
 Weary, it rested, momentarily still.

He listened, and round him the mystery  
 Thickened, till almost there seemed to be  
 A spirit of life in the sad refrain;  
 For it woke, and sobbed, and slept again,  
 And then from the silence it breathed, as low  
 As the words of a woman in bitterest woe;  
 Then swelled into fullness and depth of tone,  
 And hopeless, sunk back to a plaintive moan.  
 Then the heart of the Artist questioned the trees,  
 What it was they said to that fitful breeze,  
 Sighing and murmuring all the day?  
 Why they sang for ever that same sad lay?  
 He heard (or rather seemed to hear  
 For yet it fell not on his ear;  
 'Twas not a voice, it was not sound),  
 Something that filled the air around  
 And his spirit within, with a sense of words.

'Tis not from sorrow that our chant is grave,  
 But that the deep heart must be sadly strung,  
 As slower throbs the outer ocean's wave  
 Than ripples on the beaten sand-beach flung.  
 The years that we have watched the change around  
 Of fleeting seasons, and of Time's decay,  
 And, minuting the years, have heard the sound  
 Of forests falling, tree by tree, away,  
 Have filled our dreams with sadness, but not grief.  
 Changeless ourselves, yet seeing all things change,  
 The fading daylight and the falling leaf,  
 Trees dying that were young with us—'t were strange  
 If yet our leaves should have the aspens' thrill,  
 Trembling with joy to greet the gentle wind—  
 Nor is it yet with dread of future ill

Our hymn is sad, or doubtings of our kind.  
 Only to faithless hearts come grief and woe,  
 For they who trust th' Eternal law are strong,  
 Knowing that light, and summer, come and go  
 As It ordains—that that which seemeth wrong  
 Unmasks to Faith a lovely face at last—

That they who, patient through the winter's night  
 Will wait, shall greet the sun when night is past,  
 And through the darkness, better love the Light.  
 If weaker natures change, they change alone;

Nature and Life are steadfast 'mid decay;  
 And Faith still holds her solitary throne  
 Within the pine-heart. We have seen the day

Set in tempestuous night, and louder breathed  
 Our anthem praise; and when the winter came  
 Have felt our heads with snow-drifts wreathed—  
 Yet underneath we kept our green the same.

It is not change,—'tis not despair or pain  
 That gives our song the melancholy tone,  
 But deepest hearts must utter sad refrain—  
 Joy lives in careless, youthful hearts alone.

The Artist awoke from his forest dream,  
 And homeward turned his log canoe,  
 But ever, since, does that pine song seem  
 To say to his spirit—Grave hearts are true.

W. SYLVESTER.